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ABSTRACT

This issue of the Southern Association of Community, Junior, and Technical Colleges' newsletter begins with the agenda for the Association's 2002 annual meeting followed by lists of the 2002 Officers of the Association and Board Members. The majority of the newsletter, however, is comprised of one article by John E. Roueche, Susanne D. Roueche, and Eileen E. Ely from the University of Texas at Austin. The article beings by pointing out that the Community College of Denver (CCD) is the only Colorado higher education institution that does not have an ethnic or racial majority. Like other large urban schools, CCD's minority population is largely inner-city and poor, with many reporting annual family incomes of slightly over $10,000. More than 37% of CCD's minority population are enrolled in developmental studies. CCD administrators, faculty, and staff participate in an annual grassroots planning process to identify and document five major action priorities. Two key support documents--shared values for learning and critical skills across the curriculum--serve as the framework for discussion regarding initiatives, training opportunities, and support services. The first year in which students who began in developmental education at CCD were as likely to graduate as students not requiring assistance was 1995. In 1998, developmental education completion became a predictor of success after graduation and/or transfer. CCD's Academic Support Center (ASC) is a centralized facility that provides approximately 55,000 hours of service to students during a typical semester. In fall 1999, ASC served more than 4,000 (unduplicated headcount) students. Services include reading/study skills lab, math lab/online math educator, writing lab/online writing lab, ESL, student support services, vocational tutoring services, and others. (Contains 11 references.) (NB)

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Patrick R. Lake, Editor

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ANNUAL MEETING

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Tuesday, December 10, 2002
12:00 --1:30 p.m.
Salon E
Marriott Rivercenter
San Antonio, Texas

Presiding

Dr. Stafford L. Thompson
President, Enterprise State Junior College

Welcome

Dr. Stafford L. Thompson

Invocation

Dr. Charlie Roberts
President, Jackson State Community College

Business Session

Financial Report
Dr. Marshall W. Smith
President, John Tyler Community College

Election of Board Members and Officers
Dr. G. Edward Hughes
President, Gateway Community and Technical College

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Introduction of Speaker

Dr. L. Steve Thornburg
President, Cleveland Community College

Keynote Address

Dr. John Roueche
Director, Community College Leadership Program
The University of Texas at Austin
"Making Good on the Promise of the Open Door: The Challenges of Developmental Education"

Door Prizes

Dr. Howell Garner
President, Copiah-Lincoln Community College

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A Centralized Approach to Developmental Education: A Collegewide Strategy for Student Success

by
John E. Roueche, Suanne D. Roueche, and Eileen E. Ely
The University of Texas at Austin

> ***"The one almost indisputable solution to ensure the social and economic well-being of all citizens is increased educational access and opportunity for all to develop requisite skills and abilities."***
>
> ***-McCabe & Day, 1998, p. 15***

Life is a story of relationships, choices, experiences, and lessons learned. Our story is about the life of an institution-the Community College of Denver (CCD), a relatively poor institution by Colorado community college standards. Having followed the CCD story for more than a decade, we decided to conduct a study to solve the mystery behind this institution's remarkable success and to write our own story so that others could benefit from the experiences of this unique institution. In the process, we discovered a college's common-sense team approach to problem solving-in short, identifying and documenting priorities, designing a plan for accomplishing goals, using the expertise and gifts of everyone in the college to work toward common goals, and evaluating the results of the team effort to become an improved college.

Like so many tales, the CCD story has many fascinating chapters-including developmental education, institutional effectiveness efforts, best practices, and community partnerships-many of which are examined in our recent report, In Pursuit of Excellence: The Community College of Denver (Roueche, Ely, & Roueche, 2001). Initially, this remarkable story was sparked by the decision to change the college from "what it was to what it could become" (p. 16). For more than a decade, CCD has maintained a strong, unwavering commitment to the community college

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mission of open access, valuing diversity, improving student success, and using benchmarking practices to gauge that improvement.

For this brief report, and in lieu of the ongoing national debate over the need, cost, and value of developmental education, we elected to focus on this specialized discipline and associated factors that contribute to CCD's remarkable success. Aside from the controversial arguments surrounding developmental education, several facts remain: (a) more than 50 percent of all first-time community college students require remedial or developmental work in one or more basic skill areas prior to enrolling in college-level coursework, and (b) more than one-fourth of the American workforce is functionally illiterate (McCabe & Day, 1998). As William Brock, chairman of the 1993 Wingspread Group, eloquently insisted: "An increasingly open, global economy requires-absolutely requires-that all of us be better educated, more skilled, or adaptable, and more capable of working collaboratively" (1993, p. 5). Rather than skirting the issue or ignoring the increasing demands for basic skills education, for more than a decade CCD has chosen to face this growing problem through its Annual Planning Process, identifying and financially supporting developmental education as one of its five action priorities. CCD's developmental education efforts are expansive; however, here we can offer but an overview of the major programs, initiatives, and strategies that converge to provide quality support services to underprepared, at-risk students, despite ongoing budget and personnel reductions and concerns about future restructuring.

Methodology

For more than a decade, we have been watching the CCD transformational process-a process that embraces community partnerships, develops and refines a pay-for-performance plan, and examines factors that contribute to its high levels of student success. Having a specific interest in and desiring a better understanding of CCD's recipe for student success, an intrinsic case study was designed using a phenomenological inquiry approach, which incorporated qualitative and naturalistic inquiry methods. A variety of data collection formats were used, including focus groups, individual interviews, participant observation, and document and records analysis. Throughout the process, a constant comparative method of data analysis was utilized for examining, unit coding, and categorizing the interview data into themes. A grounded theory approach was used for developing theoretical ideas and conclusions.

CCD Developmental Education Students

CCD is the only Colorado higher education institution that does not have an ethnic or racial majority (McClenney & Flores, 1998). Resembling other large urban community colleges nationwide, a large percentage of CCD's minority student population is inner-city poor-many reporting annual family incomes of slightly more than $10,000, a figure well below the state poverty level. Although CCD's average student age is 28 years, the college is witnessing an increase in the number of younger students; in 1999, approximately 30 percent of the entire student body was 20 years of age or younger. By contrast, CCD's developmental education students fall into an older cohort varying in age from the mid- to late-20s, well into the 70s. While serving the largest number and percentage of developmental education students in the state, CCD also reports serving the largest number of multiple developmental course-takers in the state. A closer analysis reveals that 37 percent of its minority population is enrolled in developmental studies (CCD FY 1998 data).

Crossing all racial and socio-economic lines, the underprepared, at-risk student is no exception to the national norms. While the developmental student profile strongly resembles that of CCD's overall student population, this includes additional identifying attributes, including high school dropouts, welfare mothers, adults requiring retraining, immigrants requiring ESL instruction, and a wide array of other citizens who lack basic skills necessary for success in college, the workplace, and life. CCD operationalizes its belief that education "must provide the student with an understanding and appreciation of our interdependence as individuals and a nation...must be meaningful to multi-ethnic students," and must "provide the student body, faculty, and staff with an understanding of cultural pluralism" (CCD Facts, 1998-99, p.9). As a result of a decade-long effort of fostering the critical importance of diversity as a strengthening component in the life of the college, CCD has earned the self-proclaimed label of an "equal opportunity college." CCD has used the following three benchmarks as a means of gauging continued minority student success:

- In 1991, for the first time, people of color had higher transfer rates than did white students.

- In 1998, for the first time, cohort tracking indicated no significant difference in student success on the basis of race, ethnicity, age, or gender.

- In 1999, for the first time, the percentage of minorities among graduates and transfers topped 50 percent.

These statistics are especially compelling when one considers thewide range of difficulties facing minority students, especially returning women.

While the circumstances that bring students into developmental education are as different as the students themselves, common threads include a fear of failure, poor self-esteem, concerns about ability to succeed academically, and an apprehension about additional experiences in any public education system. To counter these negative concepts, the college orients developmental education students to the culture of the college-primarily by getting them involved in career planning, goal setting, problem solving, and developing communication skills.

A Framework for Success

For more than a decade, CCD administrators, faculty, and staff have participated in an annual grassroots planning process to identify and document five major action priorities for the upcoming year. To reinforce this commitment, faculty and staff prepared two key support documents-shared values for learning and critical skills across the curriculum-which have served as the framework for all discussions regarding initiatives, training opportunities, and support activities.

Shared Values for Learning. CCD faculty and staff remain committed to a teaching/learning process that:

- enables students to become independent learners

- demonstrates a commitment to student outcomes (job readiness,

- computer literacy, skill levels, mastery of subject matters)
- provides an opportunity for critical thinking and problem solving
- demonstrates an excitement about teaching and learning
- maintains high but realistic expectations
- demonstrates an appreciation for and an understanding of a diverse
- student population
- practices an individualized, student-centered approach to encourage
- growth in student self-esteem.

Critical Skills Across the Curriculum. CCD faculty and administrators have identified critical skills that must be included in every content guide and be taught across the curriculum:

- computation
- computer literacy
- reading
- writing
- speaking/listening
- valuing diversity.

To assist faculty with curriculum revisions, the T/LC developed the Integration of Critical Skills Handbook, updated regularly by all faculty. A mandated policy requires that (a) content guides must be submitted on a five-year basis for review and approval, (b) content guides must include an integration of critical skills, and (c) an accompanying course syllabus must reflect the content guide. Failure to meet final approval warrants course removal from the college catalog.

Hiring and Supporting the Best Faculty

Selection committees document their primary interest in recruiting candidates who are gifted humanitarians-individuals who demonstrate a caring and compassionate manner, exhibit a wealth of patience, understand human needs and deficiencies, and possess a keen ability to connect in critical ways with their students. They focus on hiring individuals who are flexible in their instructional methods, behave as student advocates, are easily accessible, and understand the need for balance in students' personal and academic lives as they must juggle college, work, and family responsibilities. Applicants must demonstrate a thorough knowledge of their discipline or field, exhibit a strong knowledge of teaching methods and styles, and possess the ability to relate to all students regardless of gender, ethnicity, and background. Moreover, they must present a lesson

plan to illustrate their teaching and learning philosophies. Some are asked to respond to a gender- or ethics-related student scenario during which the selection committee members can better assess the philosophical parallels and disconnects between an applicant's words and actions.

All new faculty receive an immediate orientation to CCD's Teaching and Learning Center and its support services. As added support, all newcomers are assigned a senior faculty mentor who will serve as a role model and a resource for learning about the inner-workings of the college and the institutional culture.

The Center for Educational Advancement

From its beginnings in the 1970s, CCD's developmental education program has evolved from a lab-only environment, to a classroom/lab combination, to a decentralized entity, and back to centralized-an approach that is more cost-effective, improves communication and coordination between available programs and support services, and eliminates red tape and learning obstacles. Students now have increased accessibility to faculty, support staff, tutors, lab facilities, and technology-all of which are centrally located.

While each of CCD's developmental programs and support services are independently successful, it is the combination of programs and support services that account for its remarkably high level of student success. In addition to programs and support services, the center provides multiple academic safety nets-including lab-attendance reports, Project Success Day, Advising Day, and Summer Bridge Program-to help guarantee appropriate academic preparation and consistent progress monitoring.

While serving the largest number and percentage of developmental education students in the state, CCD also reports serving the largest number of multiple developmental course-takers in the state. A closer analysis reveals that 37 percent of its minority population is enrolled in developmental studies (CCD FY '98 data). Developmental education support is provided to students through a variety of on-campus sources, including the Academic Support Center; the General Equivalency Diploma (GED) program; English as a Second Language, Reading, Precollegiate English, and Precollegiate Mathematics programs; and the Testing Center. Some of the most remarkable results include:

- 1995 was the first year that students who began in developmental education were as likely to graduate as students not requiring assistance when they enrolled;

- 1998 was the first year that developmental education completion became a predictor of success (after graduation and/or transfer).

The Academic Support Center

The Academic Support Center (ASC) is a more than 11,600 sq. ft. centralized facility, which provides approximately 55,000 hours of service to students during a typical fall or spring semester. Fall 1999, the center reported an unduplicated headcount of more than 4,000 students who used one or more of its services.

The centralized model has improved program communications, encouraged a team approach to problem solving, simplified referrals, reduced service duplications, and improved student and faculty accessibility to each other. In a move to better accommodate student needs and improve

customer service, the Educational Planning and Advising Center-an enrollment, assessment, and advising facility-was established in close proximity to the ASC. Cited as a major retention strategy, the ASC:

- provides a point of unity and support for all CCD programs
- assists students with academic goal clarification and attainment
- serves as communications facilitator between students and faculty
- teaches students specific learning skills based on individual needs
- supplies students with a sense of community and college connection
- serves as student entry-point into a learning/teaching environment.

The ASC houses a variety of support services-including reading/study skills lab, math lab/online math educator (MOLie), writing lab/online writing lab (OWL), English as a Second Language, Colorado High School Equivalency Diploma (formerly GED), Special Learning Support Program, Student Support Services, and Vocational Tutoring Services. Students have the option of using one-on-one tutoring, small group work, computer-assisted learning, course videos, instructional workshops, or any combination. Program coordinators meet on an informal daily basis to discuss student concerns and offer recommendations. The ASC offers extended hours of service, including evenings and Saturdays.

Staffing. Staffed by 14 employees-nine full-time and five assigned split assignments- the ASC also employs 185 part-time tutors and technical support personnel. As a means of training faculty, staff, and tutors in current technology, the center employs a full-time computer-aided instruction (CAI) specialist. To better coordinate instructional and laboratory efforts, full-time faculty-working split shifts-serve as coordinators.

Success Rates. The ASC implemented a new database tracking system in 1998, which provides additional information about center usage and student performance. Depending upon program and lab access, current data indicate that students using ASC facilities three or more times per week experience a success rate of 90-92 percent. Examination of specific support areas reveals success rates in the 80 and 90 percentile range, except for the GED program, which reports a remarkable 70 percent. Further analysis indicates the class withdrawal rate for students receiving ASC support is 7.75-a figure well below the overall CCD campus withdrawal rate of 12.37 and the 25 percent withdrawal rate for CCD students who do not use ASC services. Since the ASC withdrawal rate is included in the CCD overall rate, ASC documentation reports, "it is reasonable to assume that students who are helped by the ASC withdraw about 50 percent less often than students who do not receive this assistance." Simultaneously, graduation rates have increased from 17.5 percent to 35.1 percent, indicating a direct correlation between expanded support services and the number of CCD graduates.

Tutors. After completing their programs and, in some cases, their associate degrees, many students return to CCD's labs as tutors-a means of repaying a system that academically and

individually supported them. In the process, students discover that tutoring strengthens their self-esteem, raises their confidence levels, and reaffirms their own learning.

Opportunities for tutoring are available at three levels:

- Peer tutors: must have at least two or three college-level courses in the discipline to be tutored, be new to tutoring, and have earned less than a bachelor's degree

- New professional tutors: must have at least a bachelor's degree or the equivalent in the field in which they are tutoring, have less than two years of teaching/tutoring experience, and be relatively new to tutoring/teaching

- Professional tutors: must have at least a bachelor's degree or the equivalent with more than two years of teaching/tutoring experience, be able to mentor less-experienced tutors, be able to problem-solve students' difficulties and function independently in providing viable support, and be qualified to function as lead tutors in labs.

Once hired and during their first semester of work, peer and new professional tutors must attend general training sessions, which include an overview of the Academic Support Center, strategies for reinforcing study skills in the tutoring sessions, and instructions for using computer-aided instruction. To ensure quality instruction, students evaluate all tutors, using a Likert-type scale. Evaluation ratings document that tutors are consistently outstanding in their lab performance and the conduct of other services to students.

Monitoring Tools. In order to monitor student lab usage of materials and services, the ASC incorporates a comprehensive notification process using information compiled from lab sign-in sheets. Serving as an early alert system, the center distributes regular reports to all support labs detailing individual hourly usage. As an additional warning mechanism, the various support programs distribute periodic progress reports to every discipline center, notifying faculty and support staff about potential student problems-including poor lab attendance.

The Special Learning Support Program. Despite substantial financial cutbacks and downsizing in recent years, the Special Learning Support Program (SLSP) continues to provide students who have learning disabilities (LD) or special learning needs with academic assistance or specific learning accommodations. In spite of these funding and personnel reductions, the SLSP maintains its strong reputation as Colorado's most comprehensive community college learning disabilities program-providing classes specifically designed to serve LD student needs. Staffed by a program coordinator, two part-time, specially trained instructors, and five part-time tutors, the SLSP serves approximately 200 students each term.

While some students enter the program with a formal evaluation in-hand, many enter without prior testing. SLSP administers basic diagnostic tests, which help to identify learning problems and provide the instructor and student with baseline information required for proper placement.

Following the evaluation process, the student is advised of test results and recommended courses. The student can accept the advising recommendation or sign a waiver that releases the college from future academic liability. Students electing to continue in the program are provided with a variety of specialized courses, including spelling, mathematics, reading, writing, and study skills; and an array of classroom and testing accommodations, including books on tape, note takers, and

extended test time. Throughout the course of their program, students receive ongoing academic, financial aid, and personal advising as a means of helping to ensure student success.

Special Support Programs, Initiatives, and Strategies Student Support Services. The Student Support Services program targets low-income, first-generation college students and/or students with disabilities. The program is staffed by a full-time program coordinator who is responsible for peer mentoring and counseling, an administrative assistant who oversees all grant accounting, and an academic case manager who oversees all project tutoring, 10-12 peer mentors, and eight or more tutors. Following their acceptance into the program, students must arrange an orientation appointment with their case manager to discuss program and attendance requirements and to design an individualized educational plan by which their progress will be monitored. The program currently has an 88 percent success rate.

The La Familia Scholars Program. The La Familia Scholars Program is dedicated to meeting the academic, social, technological, and human needs of Hispanic students who are first-generation college attendees with parents or guardians who do not have a high school diploma or GED certificate. Other CCD students may apply after Hispanic enrollment limits are met. While not a specific mandate, low-income students are awarded priority status at the time of application.

Although the program provides La Familia scholars with a wealth of support services, program faculty and staff work with the Academic Support Center and other support programs within the college to maximize student learning and success. Similar to other programs, La Familia personnel find the cross-connection of services to be extremely beneficial to students and cost-effective for the college.

While scholars have the full advantage of case managers and peer mentors who provide comprehensive advising about classes and programs, La Familia faculty and staff constantly work with other CCD administrators, faculty, and staff to ensure that new students are adapting to college life and are on the right track toward attaining an associate's degree. Externally, program participants receive additional support and encouragement from community members, high school counselors, and baccalaureate institutions' support staff.

Recent data report an annual program retention rate of 80 percent for 250 students and an average 86 percent first-to-second semester retention rate for Hispanic students. Further data analysis reveals that program graduates added nine percent to CCD's 1998-99 graduation rate while contributing to the college's record-breaking 29 percent Hispanic graduation rate. A closer examination of learning community reading class scores indicates that more than 80 percent of the students achieved a grade of C or higher; similarly, program graduates' scores on all Academic Profile norm-referenced exams were above average. The positive effects of the program spread well beyond the boundaries of academics and into the college's cultural climate. A 1999 La Familia scholars survey indicated that 96 percent of the Hispanic student population believed that their culture was valued in the college and that the encouragement and support of the learning community faculty and staff contributed to their decision to complete their education.

The Summer Bridge Program. The Summer Bridge Program reports a decade-long history and dedication to assisting local high school students in preparing for college. The program targets students 17-22 years of age who have dropped out or stopped out, who lack only a few credits to graduate, and/or did not make college a first choice, but have a strong interest in gaining or regaining their basic skills, exploring career options, and identifying a preliminary major. By

electing to participate in this program, students have an immediate, built-in connection to academic support once they enroll in CCD.

Expanding the Traditional Advising Role. CCD places major emphasis on assisting the undecided and the unprepared student at point-of-entry into the college. Early in the admitting process, students take a computerized self-assessment test which compiles survey and demographic information that will help advisors identify at-risk students. Based on the results of this survey, students with potential tutoring, support, or financial aid needs are identified on faculty rosters. CCD has discovered that this "early alert" procedure is more effective for intervention purposes than are other, more traditional strategies for sharing critical information.

Attempting to help students become more informed consumers and more involved in the learning process, CCD now requires that they become more knowledgeable about career choices prior to program acceptance. In the process of completing program applications, students receive information regarding prerequisites, required basic skill levels, and other information pertinent to student success. Student progress is monitored and documented for use in future academic advising sessions. To assist transfer students and increase student success, a specific advising center was established for the exclusive purpose of providing information and answering questions regarding four-year institutions and upper-level programs of study.

Project Success Day. Cited as a significant retention strategy, Project Success Day was established by the Academic Support Center to get all students extra help toward their academic success early in the semester. Early during the fall and spring semesters and several weeks prior to the event, the ASC distributes class rosters to all faculty for purposes of documenting student attendance, academic progress, and suggestions for academic assistance. Rosters are returned, then scanned by the ASC; individual student progress reports are generated, including academic standing and information pertinent to Project Success Day-e.g., available lab services, support programs, and college resources. CCD cancels all classes for the project day to improve student attendance at this important and consistently successful event.

Advising Day. Advising Day, another retention strategy, was devised as a means of maintaining open communication between faculty, advisors, and the student. Scheduled for mid-fall and mid-spring, this day provides an opportunity for a wide spectrum of discussions. Discussions between faculty and/or advisors and students include, but are not limited to, future courses, career paths, study strategies, available assistance, and educational barriers.

Educational Case Management. Educational Case Management (ECM), as a student retention strategy, is used at the TEC sites, primarily in the La Familia Scholars Program. A case manager works with small groups of students and their peer tutors, serving as an advocate, problem-solver, and friend who will listen to explanations of all academic and personal difficulties that are potential barriers to student success.

During the initial stages, a case manager works closely with individual students, explaining the enrollment process, assessing basic skills, and developing academic plans. Case managers customize plans to meet individual student needs, mapping out a program of study, program alternatives, time limits, and structures. Student achievement data reveal that the case management model, dedicated to ensuring student attainment of academic and personal needs, substantially increases any student's chances for success.

Implications and Recommendations

While many variables factor into CCD's success, the results of this study provide major implications for community colleges, essentially that "[o]pen access to higher education without remediation will not solve the nation's problem concerning the significant numbers of underprepared individuals in our society" (Zeitlin and Markus, 1996, p. 28). Simply speaking, without developmental education, the open door will revolve or close for the increasing and often overwhelming numbers of underprepared and at-risk students. From an economic perspective, our nation relies heavily on a trained workforce to maintain its position in today's global economy. As former Colorado Governor Lamm observes in Megatraumas, "The future of a nation and its productivity depends on the knowledge and skill of its workers. No other resource even approaches an educated citizenry..." (1985, p.121). CCD has dedicated more than three decades to perfecting its developmental education program to ensure all students' an acceptable level of success, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or social-economic status.

Any community college can increase student success by recognizing the value of and investing in those issues that most affect student learning. CCD consistently has identified developmental education as one of its five major action priorities each year for more than a decade, has allocated funding based on those priorities, has aligned its goals with its priorities, and has evaluated its results based on its goals. In brief, CCD has elected to "walk its talk," and the results have been extraordinary. Colleges that attempt to duplicate CCD's efforts by implementing similar programs and initiatives must not ignore the essential ingredient that serves as the bonding agent for a remarkable developmental education program-a collegewide commitment to study success and to support the developmental education program and philosophy.

In addition to many of the strategies addressed here, we offer the following recommendations for the design of a successful developmental education program.

- Adopt a centralized developmental education approach.
- Hire, develop, and support the best faculty and their efforts.
- Develop a positive institutional philosophy and attitude toward
- developmental education, beginning with top administration.
- Seek additional funding in the form of grants, special allotments,
- and gifts to help subsidize developmental programs, support
- initiatives, and build a developmental education endowment fund.
- Implement an Educational Case Management Model where possible.
- Integrate critical skills across the entire curriculum, including
- the expanded use of technology.
- Invest in quality assessment and advising practices.

- Evaluate programs and special initiatives on a regular basis; then
- use collected data for program and services improvements.
- Establish the consistent practice of valuing diversity as a
- collegewide priority.

Conclusions

The belief that all students can learn if given the proper climate or approach will continue to provide the impetus for new initiatives and better coordination of existing efforts...It is a journey without an end, however, because full satisfaction will not be final until all students who come to CCD find a way to be successful. (McClenney, as cited in O'Banion, 1997, p. 224.)

The story of this college's success began with its commitment to making developmental education the centerpiece of its services to all students. CCD's story is no less than a tale of extraordinary success; it is a model for others and a testimony to a power of collective commitment to positive change for individuals and institutions that are most at risk.

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- Eileen E. Ely was Senior Research Fellow with the Community College Leadership Program at The University of Texas at Austin, and is currently Provost of the Albany County Campus, Laramie Community College, Wyoming.

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